

Echo of Another World

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Summary: Marth has been having weird dreams lately, which might not be all they seem. Roy is worried about his best friend's depressed state, but can't get the truth from him. What's going on? Modern AU, slash/shounen-ai. Shippings undecided.

Chapter 1: Chapter 1

I'm back with a new fic! (okay, I know it's not really all that exciting, but still) It's based off of another one I'm writing as well, although much more slowly and haven't yet posted any of it. But come to think of it, this one's going pretty darn slow anyway. Well, I wanted to get this one beta'd, but well... Let's say it didn't work out too well, so I'm just gonna go with the flow like I normally do. :)

Totally modern AU because I just felt like writing something like this for once. Why am I doing another chapterfic? Uhh.

Anyhow, I own none of this blah except the plort. (I know you saw that, Pervin)

The silence in the room seemed nearly unbearable to the redheaded boy sitting in the swivel chair at a semi-cluttered desk. True, there was plenty of homework to finish, and it really did need finishing, but this quiet was nerve-wracking! He released a loud breath of boredom and gave a sidelong glance in the other teen's direction.

Marth gave no reaction whatsoever. Just sat there, back against the bed, scratching his arm absently through the sleeve of his baggy jacket and staring away into his textbook as if searching for something long-lost. *Funny*, thought Roy, *he does that a lot nowadays, doesn't he? Looking like he's searching for something. Or someone.*

It was true. For the past few months, the blunette could often be found watching life with eyes that sought out something familiar, something no one else knew about. It was almost as if he suddenly remembered a lost object or person - belatedly- and couldn't stop looking about for it (them?) very much like when a child loses her puppy, and even months later when it's hopeless, still glances about with a hopeless just-in-case kind of glance.

Come to think of it, didn't he appear a bit lost even now? The redhead took a second to have a better look at him. *Is it just me, or did he get thinner?*

Roy knew something was up when he studied his best friend more closely. His face did look skinnier with the cheekbones jutting out like that, there were shadows below his eyes, and his once-smooth lips were now riddled with angry-looking red marks.

Now that he was paying attention, he realized that his earlier assumptions must've been incorrect.

Marth wasn't wearing really baggy clothes. He was too small for his old clothes. Hard as it was to believe, he was so thin his clothes didn't even fit right anymore.

Even the everpresent 'tiara,' a girly headband he always wore, looked a bit off. It was tilted to the side in a rather sadly misplaced manner over wispy blue locks of slightly messy hair. Wait. Messy hair? He frowned.

How long ago was it a trademark Marth thing to have extremely neat hair? Somehow the thought was alarming.

As he watched, Marth began to chew his bottom lip, attacking it as if it wasn't already awful-looking enough as it was.

"Hey," Roy nudged him, "are you sure you have any more good lip left to destroy?"

The other boy jerked and bit down too hard, startled. "What?" he questioned, swiping a sleeve at the sudden stream of blood which crept down to his chin. He registered the question. "No... I mean, I didn't notice. And you wouldn't have either, if you would have cared to study your homework instead of staring at me like a creep," he said with a glare.

Roy rolled his eyes and held out a tissue as a peace offering. "You do realize I wouldn't have been staring if you weren't giving your book the lost-puppy face?"

"Nonsense," muttered Marth, making good use of the tissue.

"I'm serious," the younger teen insisted, "you're weird a lot of the time the past while-"

"And you're weird all the time. Big difference."

"...like as if you lost something important, thank you for interrupting me," Roy finished in a somewhat miffed tone.

Marth gave a dismissive flutter of one hand. Roy stared mutinously.

"I'm-"

"-fine, I'm fine, yes of course you are," he mimicked the blunette in a whiny tone before grousing in his normal voice.

The older boy clamped his open mouth shut and glared mutely. The younger returned the look with equal fervor. They sat stubbornly like that for a minute.

Marth sighed. "Okay, what do you want me to do, give out a sob-story?"

Roy thought about this. That sounded terribly awkward, he had to admit. Maybe he didn't want that, but... But still. His best friend was not doing well, he felt bad for not noticing earlier, and Marth didn't seem to even want him to know. Which was miffing, just a bit.

It sure is a sad day when your bestie can no longer tell you when he's down. And why.

"I want you to feel good. About yourself, about everything," he ended up answering vaguely.

"That's impossible," laughed Marth.

"Is not," hmped Roy. He tried to organize his thoughts a bit better, meanwhile grabbing at a lock of blue hair and beginning a tiny braid.

The owner of the hair eyed him curiously.

"What are you doing?"

"Focusing. I always think better when my hands are busy." When one of his hands bumped against an ear tip, he smiled in a distracted way. His friend had the oddest ears, really, like they were mutated or something. Unlike Link, whose ears were long and slender, Marth's were like normal human ones, just with a short point where they should have been round. Kind of like fairytale elves, which Link refused to be associated with. 'HYLIAN, for goddess' sake,' he'd always insist.

Speaking of Link... The redhead frowned. Despite their differences, the Hylan and 'elf' got along very well. He wondered whether Link knew what was wrong. *He probably noticed waaay before I did and assumed I knew all about it,* he groaned inwardly.

Which was the worst problem about having quiet friends.

"I never know what's wrong with anyone, least of all with my best friends," he complained softly, still frowning. "Doesn't anybody trust me?"

Marth looked up from the book again. "I thought you said that *helps* you think," he said mildly. "Of course we trust you."

Frustration welled up inside the redhead. "Then why don't you ever tell me how you're feeling? I want to help!" He'd nearly reached the end of the braid now. It didn't help that his patience was shorter than the minuscule braid, or that until now he'd believed he knew everything there was to know about his friends. Okay, maybe that assumption wasn't all that smart. But he was pretty open with them, so couldn't they do as much too?

"Look, Roy," Marth pushed his hands away from the abused hair. "you want me to feel good?" He stared, face serious, at the other teen for confirmation.

Startled, Roy stared back. "U-um... Yes...?" He hadn't meant to put it as a question, but that intense look was unnerving.

"Really, you mean it?" The blunette leaned forward until their faces were a breath apart.

"Ah, um... Of course, duh," stammered the hairstylist, trying to get his nerve back, "jeez, Marth. You know perfectly well that I do."

"Okay, then go make dinner. I'll be hungry pretty soon." There was a grin and a hand ruffled Roy's ever messy rust-coloured locks.

Abruptly, he jerked away, dismissing his awkwardness as well as he could. "Fine," standing, he mentally shook himself and stalked off downstairs. It wasn't too hard to ignore the light burning of his cheeks.

And there was plenty to keep a mind occupied in a kitchen.

"That's just fine." He glared at a blameless ocean-blue wall. The clock ticking somewhere in the room continued to echo his monosyllables back at him agreeably, which only served to annoy him further.

Giving up, he sat down heavily on a polished wood chair and groaned. How could he have blanked out like that? That was just embarrassing.

Well, things happened. The easiest way to be cool with that was to pay it no mind. Nothing too tough. Roy berated himself for dwelling on it. Slapping his face to get his mind working again, he stood and looked around.

It was Marth's house, which generally meant about the same thing as the word *immaculate*. He knew his way around perfectly, more than he could say for his own room. His house didn't even belong in the same paragraph as Marth's. And seeing as it was neater and the adults were never home - Roy did wonder about that vaguely - it was the place they'd normally hang out, whether for school work, video games, or just plain doing nothing. Anything was fine with him if it was fine with his best friends.

Link used to hang out with them often, but recently he had gotten a job so he had that in addition to school, plus the homework which inevitably followed. Between all that, it was surprising he still had time to eat and sleep. Goddesses, they missed his input sometimes, even if he and Roy usually disagreed on just about any topic they could disagree on. It was always that way, since they'd met in kindergarten and disagreed on how to draw an 'o.' The Hylian even to this day insisted the only right way was to start from the bottom of the circle, while Roy stood firm on the belief that his teacher probably knew best when she taught him to begin at the top.

By junior high the two wouldn't even talk unless with many snide comments, much less look at each other without a glare burning between them. As others would say while shaking their heads over it, the boys shared a strong unadulterated loathing for each other. By then, Roy hadn't quite even been sure why exactly they were still repulsed at the sight of each other, but he still didn't want to let it go. Anyway, Link seemed to feel the precisely the same way.

Then in the second year of junior high Marth moved in and began to attend their school. He was an instant favourite with nearly everyone, student or teacher, with his winning ways and his earnest eager approach to any task he was faced with. Naturally, upon finding Roy struggling through pre-algebra, he offered to tutor him. The redhead hated the thought of tutoring - *I mean heck, you have to be stupid to get tutored*, right? - but he welcomed the excuse to get to know Marth. He didn't normally like smart popular kids, but this was Marth, who seemed pretty cool. He was so right to trust his gut, because after the first study session they totally hit it off. They began hanging out outside of school and tutoring, Roy showing him around town since he was new to Smash City. It felt great to find someone he could actually relax around, since the blunette with his cheerfully flexible attitude could see his point of view no matter where he came from, and it was practically impossible to start an argument.

And naturally, he soon found out that Marth had become good friends with Link. Strangely enough, it felt almost like betrayal, but he managed to squash down his negativity. It wouldn't be very flattering for Marth to think that Roy considered him a belonging he couldn't share. He did try to convince the older kid that the Hylian was trouble, but when asked why... That tripped him up. Why was Link so horrible anyway? Still, he stubbornly refused to give him another chance until Marth threatened to stop tutoring and let him fail his next exam.

On the weekend after he relented, the three of them got together at a local ice cream bar (logically, Marth pointed out, since summer was just about there although school wasn't yet out) and the blunette left the other two to exchange polite glares while he made a quick visit to the restroom. Of course they both felt obliged to blurt excuses as to why they had come, and Link's had stirred up conversation. Accidentally, he'd let out that since his rabbit died recently, it was way too boring to stay home, and Roy perked up at the word 'rabbit.' As it turned out, coincidentally they both loved rabbits.

They were in the middle of an interesting tentative conversation when Marth returned, and only managed a few half-hearted glares once they'd remembered that they were supposed to be enemies. The rest of the afternoon drifted by pleasantly, between ice cream, the 'elf's' chatter, and strolling along in the sweltering heat while trading lame jokes, stories, and traditions.

Throughout the last weeks of school, Marth introduced the younger two boys to the idea that sometimes there isn't just one answer to each question. When faced with the dilemma of telling them which was the correct way to draw an 'o' he wasted no time in thought. From his point of view, there was no single correct way. After all, he himself started an 'o' from the left side.

That shut the other two up.

In time, Roy learned to respect the long-eared teen, who in turn learned to like the redhead for his upbeat, energetic personality. It didn't take an eternity for them to get along, but without Marth it was still near to impossible. Remove the older boy for twenty minutes, and the remaining twosome would be at each other's throats like so many angry puppies. Then again, give it five more minutes, and either one or the other would suddenly remember themselves and laugh. They soon had an answer to all of their arguments, one used if ever the blunette wasn't around to give the proper

answer: "We're probably both right," which suited the fine roosters perfectly, smoothing down ruffled feathers effectively without putting down either one.

Somehow they all bonded so tightly together during the summer that followed, that in the next schoolyear they were inseparable. Every secret Roy ever had was always shared with his best friends, and he'd assumed that they did the same, especially Marth. But if he was keeping something which was most likely a big deal - *I mean, weight loss? It's gotta be BIG for Marth to do that!* - then it just might be that it was only him and Link being so open. No doubt about Link being honest, that guy *cried* around them if he was seriously upset.

Roy frowned at the potato he was peeling. Why would Marth hide anything from them? Or just him? Did Link know what was going on? There were just way too many questions.

And even more incorrect answers.

Maybe it was like when Link's parents were going to divorce, and the Hylian boy had refused to say a word about it until they dragged the truth out of him together, word by painful word. That was in their first 'together' schoolyear. Roy still remembered vividly the long string of cursewords that came with Link's confession, how he managed to cuss out his parents, friends, and the world, all in between breathless sobs as tears dropped from his eyes onto his worn-out jeans.

"Hmmm..." Roy intoned through the spoon in his mouth. This wasn't a case of parent divorce, because Marth seemed really out of touch with his. They were never home - not that Roy could tell, that is. He'd never met, seen, or even heard about them, for goddess' sake. Left one to wonder what kind of parents they were. Then again, since the older boy never spoke of them, perhaps this *was* about them.

He'd simply have to ask, he decided, and he would as soon as he was done cooking.

But, in perfect accordance with the laws of plan-breaking, he didn't get the chance to ask. Of course. Once he'd placed the filled casserole dish into the oven he betook himself back to Marth's room, ready to demand an answer, when he noticed the blunette looked to be asleep (still sitting) with his head leaned back against his bed. Roy shut his mouth immediately. If Marth was stressed it might be better to let him sleep off some of his troubles.

Just as he settled down to continue his homework, however, he was proven wrong once more.

"Roy, what do you think about..." Marth's voice came out gently, hesitating as if his throat hurt or he was trying not to frighten away a shy creature. He eyes were still closed, although when Roy looked up he could see them roving about beneath the lids. A pause.

"What?" Roy stared from the swivel chair.

Marth's brilliant blue eyes opened and stared back at him, hard. Like he was calculating.

"What do you think about the *fae*?"

Yay, cliffie, because I felt like it.

Any opinions? What do you think Marth means?

Now, if anyone has ideas for this, bring it. I will probably dismiss most, but if I really like an idea I'll put it in and credit you.

Also people! *CLAPS LOUDLY TO GET ATTENTION* IkexMarth or MarthxRoy? Tell me in the reviews if you prefer a certain shipping. This could influence the ending of the story! So let me know what you prefer and maybe give a reason why you think I should choose your preferred shipping?

Thanks for reading, and I hope you are interested!

~Fye

Chapter 2: Chapter 2

At long last I have returned. Hello.

You know, scratch being dramatic and withdrawn. I am excited to finally have this new chapter out! It has been a while.

Big thank you to those who answered my plea for help! Mana (I'm glad you enjoy LinkRoy's relationship! It's one of my favourite parts in the storytelling. And your English is great!); Rosebud1991 (Thank you for your opinion); SSBBSwords (I am trying to take your advice, starting with the new chapter. Can I just say your "...Roy is always weird so whateeeever go away and leave me alone kthx" comment just about killed me? Perfectly portrayed, I couldn't have put it better); Lycoris-nova (Isn't innocent!Roy irresistible? I must say he is tempting me to continue the story in that direction. Thanks for reading); and ThePervinErmin, my real-life reviewer (muwah!)

To the new readers, welcome and thank you for clicking!

To the veterans, you've been my strength for this new chapter. Please enjoy the effect of your reviews!

"Roy, what do you think about..." Marth's voice came out gently, hesitating as if his throat hurt or he was trying not to frighten away a shy creature. His eyes were still closed, although when Roy looked up he could see them roving about beneath the lids. A pause.

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Marth's brilliant blue eyes opened and stared back at him, hard. Like he was calculating.

"What do you think about the fae?"

Marth searched Roy's face for a sign of recognition; a flicker in his eyes, a thoughtful expression, or merely a blink, anything.

The redhead gave him a more blank look than even a bored white cat could manage. "The what," he rasped before clearing his throat and repeating. "The what now?"

"You know, elves, fairies, wraiths, mer, etcetera?"

Roy's eyes narrowed as he stared, trying hard to comprehend the meaning of the question.

The older boy sighed, tucking a loose lock of blue hair behind one pointy ear, and took on an incredulous tone. "Return of the Fae? Mystery Otome? Zeiva Productions' new game? Please tell me you didn't forget my latest obsession," he intoned with a mock-upset look. "You and Link did help me buy it."

He cringed inwardly at the younger teen's confused face, but kept up his light-hearted mask. Obviously the ginger wasn't sure whether to buy the drastic mood change.

"Right," came the slow answer. "Weird that you're into dating sim, though. Isn't that for girls?"

"Hm," Marth leaned back again, smiling at his friend's close-mindedness. "It is *aimed* at a girl audience, mostly, but a lot of guys play. I don't play much of anything usually, just liked the description and art style. It's not bad, more fun plot and action than the usual twitterpation-based otome."

"Huh." At least Roy seemed somewhat distracted by the blather, for which Marth felt grateful. Roy's attention span had to be the shortest in Pheraen history, a fortunate flaw, if the oxymoron made any sense. As long as he could remember the redhead had always been the quickest to switch tracks, forget grudges (except that goddess-awful one with Link), and change topics. However his quickness had its drawbacks. He was the first to notice if someone was depressed, to hell with attempts to mask it.

In some cases it was a good thing, it really *was*. But still.

"Well, what's it about?" He was pulled out of his thoughts abruptly. "You wouldn't like something tasteless, I don't think, so it's got to be good."

The blunette waved a hand in the general direction of the other boy. "Behind you, you can have a look at the case." He collected his describing abilities while the younger one did as instructed. "It's a story about a young fae - an elf in this

case - who gets stranded in the human world in an attempt to find the Excalibur, which is in this game defined as a shapeshifting weapon, changing to suit the skills of any who holds it. It's also an ancient talisman, old legends describing it as 'the lost power to save,' the one thing which may timelessly protect the world of the fae.

The legends also tell that when a human was once brought into the fae world, he mistook the sword for an ordinary weapon, and left with it in his possession. It was never recovered, although many tried.

So this kid left the fae world to find it, and then these are his adventures within the human world," he nodded at the thin case in Roy's hands.

Roy looked interested now. Turning the case over to look at the back, he admitted, "Does sound kind of fun, I probably wouldn't be patient enough to play through the whole thing though. Any luck finding Excalibur?"

Marth shook his head. "False leads all over the place, plus it's annoying that I keep having to play through his chats with potential romantic interests," he couldn't hold back a small rueful grin.

"Make Link finish playing it for you in his free time. He likes the whole gaming thing."

"If he *had* the free time for it."

"That's right.." Roy sighed, currently gazing up at the ceiling. His blue eyes roved about as though they were reading a story invisible to all others. He was leaning back in the chair, one foot on the edge beside the knee of his other leg, the one which stayed down as legs should when one sat upon a chair. "Wonder what his job's like?"

Marth resisted the urge to reprimand the chairsitter. Better not to sound like a mother. He tugged distractedly at a thread sticking out of his sleeve. "Helping his father at the bakery, he said. It's probably his way of letting his father know he hasn't been abandoned by his son at least, despite the divorce." Realizing the significance of what he'd just said, he looked back up. Sure enough, the other's blue gaze looked reminiscent of frost once more. "Roy..."

"Don't you 'Roy' me," thus addressed Roy snapped. "You guys really do talk more without me. If only someone would like to let me know why."

Marth rubbed between his eyebrows. "Look, I was just letting you know. No point in turning it into a mountain. I'm not looking for a fight. If I was, I'd be playing the game to which belongs the case you're nearly snapping in two, from the looks of it," he said, suddenly feeling very tired.

The case was set back on its shelf in a hurry. "I don't get you, Marth." Roy stood up, shoving his books aside, and left the room. The blunette made no move to stop him, just sighed yet again and returned his eyes to his textbook.

It's not like I mean to push you away, he couldn't help the slightly resentful pang. It didn't help that Link and Roy didn't talk much, each waiting for the other to say something like the idiots they were. Maybe it was time to force another get-together again. But.. he didn't know if he could. He felt exhausted and confused.

One of the fae? It seemed ridiculous, but that could explain the ears. Marth rubbed at a pointed tip meditatively. He'd always wondered about them. Then again, how long exactly was always? To tell the truth, he couldn't remember much beyond five or so years ago.

"Don't worry, Roy," he smiled wryly. "I don't get myself much either." And he wasn't even sure how much he *wanted* to know, at that. More likely than not it was a mutation of some sort, one he was really making too big a deal out of, but he couldn't help the niggling feeling that it was important and if ignored could become a huge problem. *Strange mutated ears are a huge problem indeed, Marth*, he mocked himself, then groaned and covered his face, slender fingers digging deep into his blue hair.

"Who am I kidding..." His eyes stared sightlessly into the darkness provided by his hands. Images from recent recurring dreams stood out well against the black.

A cliff edge overlooking a vast vale, a stream passing through the middle, mountains on all sides.

He'd been having weird dreams for over a month now, though at first it was fun. His dreams used to be boring and monochromatic, but now burst with colours and images of fantastical creatures. What's more, he felt like he knew them.

"Marth, are you still stuck in this world of yours?" An incredulous voice which belonged to another man with pointed ears. Not Hylian. Like his own, he realized with a start.

"Me?" He questioned. "Looks like you're the one stuck in an odd world." Frowning, he studied the stranger.

The person smiled. The look of it made Marth feel he was being pitied, an unpleasant sensation. "You still haven't remembered? What are you wasting your time on?"

That stung. The blunette gritted his teeth but was silent, looking away again over the greenness of the valley. It wasn't interesting at all, being treated like a child caught wasting away school hours, especially not by someone who acted like they were familiar when they weren't.

"How long are you going to search for 'it'? You've been gone for days. Weeks. It's been a month, I told you this was a bad idea." The stranger's face had suddenly darkened.

Marth took a step away from him. "Could you leave me alone?" he asked in a chilly tone, trying to keep his nervousness at bay. Even in a dream, it could be extremely unpleasant to associate with quick-tempered people. Not to mention tall handsome ones.

"Stop fooling around, Marth. Just come back already. Can't you see this hunt is hopeless?"

He shot a glare at the man. "Come back where? You're awfully specific."

The stranger watched him quietly for a moment. Marth vaguely noted that his eyes were blue as well, a piercing gray-blue nearly as light as Roy's ocean blue. "Here," he stated softly, gesturing toward the vale and beyond with a sweep of an arm. "Home."

"When you say 'home'..." Marth shook his head. "Smash City, in Pherae.. that's where. I haven't a clue where this is."

A wistful shimmer passed through that person's eyes. "You can't stay away forever. I won't let you simply disappear like that. Like he did. This's where you should be, what you left Altea for." Seeing the blue-haired teen start and stare, he nodded, continuing. "That should trigger something. Don't you remember Altea?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, this isn't triggering anything!" Marth said desperately, one of his hands held to his head, where he felt a painful throb at the name. "As long as I remember, it's been Pherae, even if another city."

"Just how much do you remember?" The man's lips twisted a little, as if at irony.

"Stop it, just stop," what was meant to be an annoyed reprimand came out in a pleading tone instead. There was pressure building behind his eyes, and he heard a rushing noise in his ears. If the man said anything else, he couldn't hear it, not over the screaming in his head.

The first dream had been easy to dismiss, just as with any nightmare one wakes up from panicking and sweating. But that was the problem - it was just that. The first. From then on these dreams just kept coming, persistent. Thinking about it was stressful to the point of depression.

"Ughhh," moaned Marth pitifully, rubbing at his face like rabbit washing. "I need a roommate who'll keep me sane."

"Maybe a cat?" suggested Roy's voice. The blunette yelped inwardly, outwardly looked up at the speaker.

"I expected you to sulk longer."

The statement went ignored. "Cats would suit you pretty well, I bet. How about it?"

"Perhaps.." he considered. A cat seemed a logical choice, as they were calm and much friendlier than either of his friends were at the current moment. "Know any?"

"Mom brought in a stray a couple days ago, but I wouldn't have thought to mention it if you hadn't complained. She's gray, with a couple white stripes across the back, and about this small." From the amount of space between the hands demonstrating, she was either a small adult or adolescent, Marth judged.

"Temperament?"

Roy made a face. "Heck if I know. What do most strays act like on their first week?"

Point taken. With a nod, he decided aloud. "I'll take her, at least for now. But if she doesn't take to me, she's going back home," he warned.

"Right," the redhead agreed brightly. Marth felt wary. He could have sworn his friend had his fingers crossed behind his back.

A pause lasted perhaps twenty seconds before Roy plunked into the chair once more, causing a squeak from the dilapidated seat. He pulled the books back toward himself again, but even as his gaze flicked back and forth over the pages, his mind was obviously elsewhere - a discomforting notion for the room's owner.

This study session was a bad idea, Marth thought, worrying his bottom lip with his teeth. For more than a month the three hadn't hung out at all, and for the first time he wasn't sure how he managed it earlier. How did he always keep the younger ones pacified? Right now, his brain was working so badly he couldn't even calm *one*, for goddess' sake.

Working badly? Scratch that, his brain wasn't in working condition in the least.

He was constantly arguing with himself inwardly now, too much to focus on every other creature's meager problems in addition to the world wars going on inside his mind, triggered by those thrice-bedamned dreams. They drove him mad until he was ready to tear his blue hair out with the roots and then go Google everything and anything he could find on the mysterious "fae." Pointed ears, occasionally lacey wings, slender build, bright eyes often blue. So vague, all too vague. He couldn't find anything that matched perfectly.

For the thirtieth time, he was staring rudely at the stranger - a habit he knew he really should quit. But there it was, those ears just like his own. Pointed. Short. Pointed. Short. It kept running through his head like a chant. Why? Why were they like his?

"Similar, aren't we? Odd you haven't remembered why yet. It's been a week, and still you stubbornly refuse to think."

Marth scowled. He hated being unable to figure out a tough math problem, but this was worse by ten times at the least. After all, it was simple. Easy enough for a kindergarten-level Link, but at the same time way too hard.

It made sense, didn't it? The fae, and this guy, they were just like Marth. There was such a painfully obvious connection.

On the other hand, admitting to such a thing would he to admit that his dreams were something real, which was impossible and would therefore prove him to be demented. He could not let himself just lose like that. His mind was stronger than these dreams!

"Who is 'he?'" he demanded, ignoring the jab. "You keep mentioning 'him,' this mysterious person who disappeared, god knows where, whom you consider lost."

The stranger shrugged dismissively. "That's better left forgotten, as he will never return."

An answer which wasn't an answer at all, Marth thought sourly. He wished he could understand what was wanted of him, why this.. this weird elf guy was after him all the time. Annoying was not the word, but it was disconcerting, disturbing. Since he was stuck in this place every time he dreamed, he was forced to acknowledge that it wasn't a natural occurrence.

Not that it wasn't somewhat enjoyable. The scenery was refreshing, and the cool breezes were indescribable, like healing to his warm skin. All throughout the vale was a measure of peace, the soft noise of the stream nearly nonexistent among all the other sounds of wild life.

Oddly familiar small winged cats bounded past, muttering quiet things under their breaths; large drab-coloured butterflies clicked past, wings making a snapping noise each time they touched; somewhere far off, a hoarse shrieking call sounded, from a huge bird too large to see all of at once; and within the trees a creature half eagle and half lion lurked. Instinctively, he listed their names, although he didn't know the place or its inhabitants.

Leep, magfliths, a roc, and a gryphon. Although he could have approached them at any moment, he preferred to act like he hadn't seen them.

If he got attached to this strange world? What then? Marth knew he'd get even more depressed, and he was already pretty bad now.

Remembering those earlier dreams made Marth decide all over again that he needed an anchor to keep him in place. Something or someone which would further attach him this world, before he'd lose himself to the other one entirely. By now, he was quite close to losing.

A cat, he mused. Perhaps that was exactly what he needed. An utterly normal animal.

"These creatures..." Marth stared at the ground when a winged horse, a pegasus, examined him curiously. "Do any of them belong to you?"

The man considered his question a moment before answering with a smile, "No, not really. They're too wild to keep, more like your neighbors in the human world, you know? You can't claim any of them as your own, however you can call upon them for help, and you know them all by name. Not a name you've given them, but rather a name they offer to you as you offer yours."

As the blunette thought about it now, it struck him that there was one more thing he need to know about this cat. From the kitchen there came the inevitable mind-breaking beep, signalling the end of the study session. He placed aside his homework and stood, stretching his stiff muscles. He glanced at the other boy.

"Does she have a name?"

Roy looked up, gazed blankly for five seconds, and shrugged. "I didn't ask."

Well, there you have it. Still short, but a bit longer than the first.

If anyone hasn't yet answered which pairing they support, but would like to, please do.

Also! New question: Who do you like better so far, Marth or Roy? (I'd mention Link, but he hasn't had any real stage time yet.) Or perhaps someone prefers the stranger..?

Leave a review, save a magflith? Kidding, but please review!

Fye